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(South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs)

SOUTH DAKOTA WORLD WAR II VETERAN RECEIVED FRENCH MEDAL

PIERRE, S.D. – James R. Hanson is a true hero of America, South Dakota, and now of France.

Hanson, now 97 and living in Bison, received the gratitude of France in the form of the French Legion of Honor medal. It was presented by Gov. Dennis Daugaard and SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman, during a ceremony at the South Dakota State Capitol on Tuesday, June 9.

“The French Legion of Honor Medal is the highest honor bestowed in France,” said Gov. Dennis Daugaard. “Past recipients of the award include General Dwight Eisenhower, General Douglas MacArthur and Admiral Michael Mullen. Today we present this award to Bob Hanson, one of South Dakota’s own, for the sacrifices he made to serve his country in World War II.”

Established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802, the French Legion of Honor “is the highest honor that France can bestow upon those who have achieved remarkable deeds for France” stated a letter written by Vincent Floreani, counsul general in Chicago and read by Secretary Zimmerman.

“Through this award, the French government pays tribute to the soldiers who did so much for France and Western Europe,” Floreani wrote. “Seventy years ago, you gave your youth to France and the French people.”

“Heroes are in our lives every day,” said Larry Zimmerman, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. “Sometimes they are hard to find, but when discovered they are a treasure of how our freedoms have survived. Heroes, like Hanson, fought bravely and witnessed the worst of the war.”

